

SOVIET AFFAIRS ANALYSIS SERVICE

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Outline of Reference Paper On:

THE PROBLEM OF FORMING THE "NEW SOVIET MAN"

January, 1960, saw important moves in the Soviet leaders' drive to imbue an often recalcitrant populace with the highly touted virtues of the "New Soviet Man." On January 10, 1960, the Party Central Committee published a lengthy resolution on Soviet propaganda which conceded weaknesses in this sphere and outlined imperative measures to rectify the situation. Late in January, 1960, the Third Congress of the Society for the Propagation of Scientific and Political Knowledge, meeting in Moscow, heard a Central Committee demand that the Society act much more vigorously than before to spread Party propaganda among all layers of the Soviet "masses."

This Congress was only one item, though a very noteworthy one, which figured in the stream of publicity directly or indirectly related to the Central Committee's propaganda resolution which has filled the Soviet press for the past two months. Soviet magazines and newspapers are concentrating their fire on "survivals of bourgeois mentality" which block the "New Soviet Man" — that paragon of Communist unselfishness and "Soviet patriotism" — from becoming predominant in Soviet society. Classed as "bourgeois survivals" and attacked particularly vehemently are the prevalence of a selfish, property-minded outlook in all sectors of Soviet society, high Party and government officialdom included, and also that old Soviet bugbear, "bourgeois nationalism", so often attacked under other pretexts. The press in such non-Russian Soviet republics as Latvia, Azerbaidzhan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, is paying particular attention to this theme.

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THE PROBLEM OF FORMING THE "NEW SOVIET MAN"

Between January 26 and 28, 1960, The Third Congress of the Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge met in Moscow. In its message of greeting to the Congress, the All-Union Party Central Committee demanded that the work of the Society be rapidly raised to a "new and higher level," and proclaimed:

One of the Society's main tasks is the struggle against bourgeois ideology and the survivals of capitalism in people's minds — the rendering of active assistance in molding the New Man with Communist traits of character, with new habits and a new morality (Pravda, January 27, 1960).

In mid-1959, the Central Committee, in connection with the Society's unsatisfactory work, adopted a resolution which read in part:

Many eminent scholars in this country, people prominent in its social and political life, writers, composers and artists, have ceased to take part in the Society's work. Not infrequently, individual workers in the Society, as a result of their unscrupulousness, place the rostrum at the disposal of all kinds of hacks and nonentities, thus compromising both the Society and the cause of propaganda through lectures (Partiinaya Zhizn, Party Life, 1959, No. 18).

Every effort was made to assemble for the Congress the most prominent representatives of Soviet academic life and to strengthen the Society's governing board by co-opting considerable numbers of scholars.

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The principal function of the Society is to spread political propaganda among the broadest possible public in the USSR. The holding of this Congress, therefore, may be termed yet another practical measure for realizing the Central Committee's resolution "On the Tasks of Party Propaganda in the Conditions of Today," published in Pravda on January 10, 1960. In this resolution, the Central Committee called for a reorganization and intensification of Party propaganda aimed at forming the "New Soviet Man," and developing "active and sturdy fighters for Communism."

Resolution Admits "New Soviet Man" Still Invisible

The problem of creating a "New Man" endowed with the specific characteristics of Communist morality is as old as the Soviet regime itself. Even now, the "Soviet Man" exists only in terms of his citizenship. To endow him with all the qualities which the Soviet leaders attach to this concept has so far proved impossible. The Central Committee's resolution of January 1960 in reality amounts to an admission of the failure of all the attempts made so far to achieve this goal.

What are these characteristic features, this morality, that the "New Soviet Man," the active builder of Communism, is supposed to have? The foundations of this morality, declares the January, 1960 Central Committee resolution, are an "unquestioning devotion to the motherland and the cause of Communism, hatred for its enemies, and readiness to sacrifice personal interests for the interests of society." The Central Committee's resolution went on to describe "Communist consciousness" --- the degree to which Communist-mindedness is developed among the masses of the Soviet population --- as a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the Seven-Year Plan and the successful realization of Communism:

The successful realization of the program of Communist construction, the creation of a material and technical basis for Communism, the further strengthening of the economic might of the USSR, the achievement of material welfare, depend directly upon raising the level of the workers' consciousness. (Ibid., January 10, 1960).

After admitting the failure of the attempts to develop a "Communist consciousness" and inculcate in Soviet youth the principles of Communist morality, the resolution demands that a determined struggle be commenced "against persons refusing to take part in socially-useful work, against a contemptuous attitude toward labor and the wastage of social property." While insisting upon the importance of developing a Communist attitude to labor, it demands the observance of the Socialist principle: "He who does not work shall not eat."

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"Private-Ownership" Mentality Scored

The Soviet press is currently filled with attacks upon all different levels of Soviet society on account of their alleged "possessive psychology" and "private-ownership" attitudes. On the "Lenin Way" kolkhoz (collective farm) in Tambov Oblast (district), for example:

... There is much land, much equipment, and experienced leaders, but a considerable number of the kolkhoz members still spend most of their time on their personal plots. Each of them has a cow, from three to five sheep, pigs, ducks, chickens, some have up to a hundred geese. On their personal plots, which may be as big as half a hectare (one and one-quarter acres) they cultivate for sale such labor-consuming crops as makhorka (a tobacco substitute). Is it therefore surprising that of 757 able-bodied kolkhoz members, 311 have not fulfilled their minimum of work-day units?

Referring to the ambitions of the members of various governmental institutions, including even senior officials in the Belorussian SSR, to acquire their own personal plots, and to their methods of realizing these ambitions, Izvestia declared on January 27, 1960:

Private-owner appetites, the desire to get rich at the expense of the community, to use public property at all costs for mercenary ends, for one's own personal profit and welfare--- this is the mold that is now eating away the gardening societies (groups of workers allotted gardens for collective cultivation).

It is clear from the Izvestia article that this "mold" has attacked Party and governmental officials of the highest rank.

Soviet propaganda varies according to the social class to which it is addressed. In the Central Committee resolution on propaganda, industrial workers and kolkhoz members are advised not to study the principles of Marxist-Leninist theory but merely to develop a proper attitude to public service.

According to the Central Committee resolution, the second function of propaganda is to wage an implacable struggle against "cosmopolitanism" and nationalism and to cultivate "Soviet patriotism and internationalism."

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In ideological and educational work, the advantages of socialism are insufficiently and sometimes unskillfully explained, inadequate use is made of the achievements of our country in all aspects of public life for the purpose of educating Soviet citizens in a spirit of Soviet patriotism and national pride. This is a serious omission, particularly in view of the fact that the enemies of Socialism are intensifying their propaganda in favor of the capitalist way of life and the reactionary ideology of cosmopolitanism.... The leaders of certain Party organizations are not conducting a determined struggle against alien ideologies and are not showing the proper resistance to manifestations of nationalism, cosmopolitanism and apolitical attitudes (Pravda, January 10, 1960).

The failure to produce a feeling of Soviet patriotism, especially among young people, was dealt with by Leonid F. Ilichev, head of the propaganda section of the Party Central Committee, in an article, "Problems in the Communist Education of the Workers," in Kommunist, the Soviet Communist Party theoretical journal:

It has to be admitted that recently, in our ideological work, the cultivation of socialist patriotism and national pride in Soviet citizens has been noticeably neglected. (Ibid., 1959, No. 14)

Ilichev considers it a serious mistake that during the last three years no exhaustive articles and scarcely any books or brochures have been published, dealing specifically with the education of the workers in a spirit of Soviet patriotism. Young people in the USSR, he says, are falling under the influence of Western ideas and ceasing to take an interest and pride in the achievements of their own country. In its resolution on propaganda, therefore, the Central Committee states that young people should be taught

...to understand correctly phenomena of public life, to transform the principles of Communist morality into profound personal convictions, and to show intolerance toward manifestations of bourgeois ideology, apolitical attitudes and narrow philistine views.

According to the resolution, the Soviet citizen must be unshakably convinced of the final triumph of "Communism" and of the overwhelming advantages of socialism over the Western form of public and private life.

"Bourgeois Nationalism" in USSR Again Worries Party

The resolution recognizes the increase in nationalist tendencies in the non-Russian Soviet republics, points out the great harm these do to the work of forming a Communist society, and demands increased resistance to them. In ideological work, the emphasis should be laid upon

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... the international education of the workers. . . . It is essential to wage an implacable struggle against manifestations of bourgeois nationalism, against tendencies to idealize or tone down the social anomalies of the past and to distort the true history of individual nations and their mutual relations with other peoples of the USSR, and against individual manifestations of national isolation and exclusiveness.

In fact, during the last six months, nationalist tendencies, described by the Soviets as "bourgeois nationalism," have made themselves acutely felt in a number of the non-Russian Soviet republics and in a wide variety of social levels ranging from senior Party officials to students. In Azerbaidzhan and Latvia, these "nationalist" tendencies have resulted in the removal from their posts of certain Party and government officials. In an article on "The Education of Young People," First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia Arvids F. Pelshe writes:

Leading workers of the Latvian republic, such as, for example, former Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic Eduards K. Berklav, have begun to climb down from the class positions of the Party. In their practical work, they have tolerated the distortion of Lenin's nationality policy. They violated Lenin's principles for the selection and distribution of cadres. . . . Reactionary imperialistic circles, the White Latvian emigres, in their subversive activity from the other side of the border, are relying upon these very same nationalistic survivals, which have not yet been lived down. (Pravda, January 27, 1960).

The writer observes that these influences are having a particularly big effect upon young Latvians, especially students, and are preventing their education in the spirit of "socialist internationalism."

At a meeting of prominent Party members in the Kazakh SSR, Dinmukhamed A. Kunayev, recently appointed First Secretary of the Kazakhstan Party Central Committee, stressed the need for avoiding conflicts on national issues. He urged that the principle of the friendship of peoples be guarded "like the apple of one's eye." (Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, January 22, 1960).

On January 24, 1960, Turkmenskaya Iskra, (Turkmenian Spark), declared:

In the national (i. e., non-Russian) republics of this country, including Turkmenistan, the struggle against manifestations of nationalism is now of tremendous importance. . . . It is no secret that certain students are now themselves the bearers of survivals of the past.

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On January 14, 1960, Bakinsky Rabochy, (Baku Worker), organ of the Azerbaidzhanian Party Central Committee, admitted that in the Azerbaidzhan SSR

... due attention is not being paid to questions of educating the workers in a spirit of socialist internationalism, and the indestructible friendship of peoples. . . . It is known that serious omissions in ideological work, especially in the international education of the workers, have been made in the Party organization of the republic.

Similar examples may be quoted from the other national republics of the USSR, showing the importance of this problem in present-day Soviet conditions.

Soviet Propaganda Called "Isolated," "Limited"

While laying down new measures for promoting propaganda, the Soviet leaders point out what they regard as the two main faults of this propaganda as conducted at present :

The principal fault of Party propaganda remains its still not completely eradicated isolation from life, from the practice of building Communism. (Pravda, January 10, 1960).

This "isolation" is due to the second fault, that of the inability of Soviet propaganda to arouse the enthusiasm of the workers for productive work in all branches of the country's economy.

The second serious fault of Party propaganda is the narrowness of its sphere of influence, its limited scale and not always accessible form of exposition. (Ibid. January 10, 1960)

In its first issue for 1960, the journal Partinaya Zhizn published an article entitled "Political Knowledge for Every Worker," which makes it clear that no levels of Party authority are interested in the question as to which section of the public is being covered by propaganda: their chief object is to "attract every Communist into political studies." The article states:

Communist society is being built not only by Communists, but by millions of workers. . . . The absolute majority of workers and kolkhoz members have not been drawn into political studies and receive no systematic knowledge about the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the foundations of Marxism-Leninism or concrete economics. (Ibid., No. 1, 1960).

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Accordingly, perhaps the principal goal expressed in the Central Committee's recent resolution on propaganda is to extend this propaganda to cover a very large section of the Soviet population. However, if the efforts to achieve the narrower aim of the effective education of Party and Komsomol (Young Communist) members along the desired lines do not prove successful, as they have not hitherto, this large aim will, of course, be quite impossible of achievement.

All the material mentioned here, including the proceedings of the Third Congress of the Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge, the January, 1960, resolution of the Party Central Committee on Party propaganda, and much other material contained in the Soviet press, make it quite clear that the goal of forming the "New Soviet Man," as an "active and conscious builder of Communism," is as far from realization now as it was forty years ago.

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